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Comic book reading interests of primary IV and intermediate III grade students in Ames, Iowa schools

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Comic book reading interests of primary IV and intermediate III grade students in Ames, Iowa schools

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Abstract

This research examines the reading interest in comic books of a Primary IV (term used in Ames, Iowa for Third Grade) and Intermediate III (term used in Ames, Iowa for Sixth Grade) students. The study considered whether the sex, grade level, as well as reading ability of the students influenced the quantity and types of comics being read.

In the study three main hypotheses were tested. These hypotheses are listed as follows: 1) During a one week period, male students in the Primary IV and Intermediate III grades will read 25% more comic books than female students, 2) Students with a stanine score of 5 or below in the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test will read twice as many comics as those with a higher stanine score of 6 or above on the same test, 3) Students in the Primary IV grade will read 25% more comic books than female students.

For the purpose of this study a questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the data. A sample of 296 Primary IV and 315 Intermediate III students in six elementary schools were selected. The researcher received 199 Primary IV and 208 Intermediate III responses.

After all the questionnaires were completed by the students, the researcher consulted the files and recorded each student's stanine score in the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test.

The findings of this study concluded that based on the data obtained that grade placement level, and sex are not important indicators of difference in readers of comic books. However, the stanine score of the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test appears to be a stronger indicator when compared with the sex and grade placement level of the students.

COMIC BOOK READING INTERESTS
OF PRIMARY IV AND INTERMEDIATE III
GRADE STUDENTS IN AMES, IOWA SCHOOLS

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degrees
Masters of Arts

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July 14, 1977

Read and approved by
Mary Lou McGrew
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Date: July 19, 1976

ABSTRACT

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In the study three main hypotheses were tested. These hypotheses are listed as follows: 1) During a one week period, male students in the Primary IV and Intermediate III grades will read 25% more comic books than female students, 2) Students with a stanine score of 5 or below in the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test will read twice as many comics as those with a higher stanine score of 6 or above on the same test, 3) Students in the Primary IV grade will read 25% more comic books than female students.

For the purpose of this study a questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the data. A sample of 296 Primary IV and 315 Intermediate III students in six elementary schools were selected. The researcher received 199 Primary IV and 208 Intermediate III responses.

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The findings of this study concluded that based on the data obtained that grade placement level, and sex are not important indicators of difference in readers of comic books. However, the stanine score of the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test appears to be a stronger indicator when compared with the sex and grade placement level of the students.

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INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

If the "child is father of the man" (Wordsworth), then it is important. . . to take note of the literature that influences childhood. This certainly includes comic books.¹

More than a billion comic books have been sold each year in the United States. Obviously comics have enjoyed widespread popularity. Children have been reading this material despite the concern of adults. The adults' campaigns against the magazine, very popular in the forties and fifties, have been toned down during the last twenty years. Teachers and others have given various reasons for rejecting comics and comic books. For example, it has been cited that comics have distorted established truths, undermined adult authority, placed undue emphasis on crime and violence, and have a poor reputation as disseminators of high-quality literature. Whatever ~~the~~ fears or concerns expressed by parents and others that comics may be low-grade and perhaps not the 'best in their literature', the material has continued to have a tremendous circulation among children.

Two studies by Arthur Berger,² "The Sunday Comics," and "Lil' Abner," have demonstrated that comics do play an important role in the lives of people who read them. The

¹Bill Katz, Magazines for Libraries (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1974), p. 27.

²Arthur Berger, The Comic-Stripped American (New York: Walker, 1973), p. 6.

reading of these comics has been the source of diversion and escapism, as well as information about life.

There are several reasons why comics have been ignored. It may be, as men argue, that there is little of significance in them and that it is a waste of time to take them seriously. Thus graduate students go through our significant and less significant American writers and thinkers with a fine-tooth comb, while the 'junk' that hundreds of millions of people read is almost totally forgotten.³

The phenomenal appeal of comics, especially with the young readers of today, should be a challenge to our thinking about children's reading. Why do they read comics? Some researchers concluded that it is because of the easy approach of the comic strips with pictures and the dialogue of the fewest possible words. Also there has been note made of the "good and bad guys" being clearly indicated through facial expressions, their clothing and the way in which speech has been shown in the dialogue balloons. Another reason for the popularity of the medium has been that the dialogue and action has been expressed in contemporary terms and easily understood by the readers.

"Why do they read comics?" has led to another question, "What kinds of comics do they read?" The second question formed part of the problem for this study. This researcher was concerned as to whether the reading interests of students of a lower elementary class and an upper elementary would vary greatly. The study needed to consider whether the grade level, as well as reading

³Ibid., p. 2.

ability influenced the quantity and types of comics being read. Several research studies showed that males read at least 10%-25% more comics than females, so the influencing affect of the students' sex has been a consideration.

Hypotheses

This section outlined the testable hypotheses concerning the relationship between variables which were identified in the problem. In any discussion of reading interests of students, variation occurs according to the grade level, reading ability and sex of the student.

Hypothesis 1:

During a one week period, male students in the Primary IV and Intermediate III grades will read 25% more comic books than female students.

Hypothesis 2:

Students with a stanine score of 5 or below in the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test will read twice as many comics as those with a higher stanine score of 6 or above on the same test.

Hypothesis 3:

Students in the Primary IV grade will read 25% more comic books than students in the Intermediate III grade.

Assumptions

Before proceeding with the research study, the author made two assumptions concerning the community as well as the children's reading. First, the children living

in the Ames Community School attendance area are from relatively homogeneous socio-economic backgrounds, and they will have access to comic books. Second, knowing that children's reading interest patterns may vary, an assumption was made that at least fifty percent of a classroom of students are reading comic books.

Limitations

There were several limitations for this study. Only Primary IV boys and girls from lower elementary grades and Intermediate III grade students from the upper elementary were selected for the study of comic book interests. Age, occupation and the educational background of the parents may also limit the comic book reading of the students. Also due to the limitation of time and money, the study included only Ames' students and no generalizations were made about comic book reading interests beyond those of students in the Ames' schools.

Definitions

Comic Strips

Berger defines comic strips as a

. . . narrative by sequence of pictures, continuing character from one sequence to the next, and the inclusion of dialogue within the picture.⁴

Comic Magazines (Comic Books, Comics)

Goldwater states that:

⁴Berger, op. cit., p. 35.

Comic magazines or comic books as they are more often called are publications consisting of fictional or factual narrative told by means of a sequence of cartoon drawings in four colors, plus lettered captions and dialogue. A marked characteristic of the comic technique is the enclosure of dialogue in "balloons" pointed towards the speaker.⁵

The complete story usually ~~was~~^{is} bound in a paper cover.

Stanford Achievement Tests

A series of comprehensive achievement tests developed to provide measurement and assessment of learning at different levels of the educational process. (New York: Harcourt, Brace).

Significance of the Study

Many of the research studies found concerning comic books were conducted during the 1940's and 1950's; therefore, the results are dated. However, there could be the possibility that this study would show some support for some of the past studies.

No one has previously attempted an investigation of comic book interests of students in the Ames' Schools, so the results might suggest that some comics, after review and study of the 'best' in the medium, might be integrated into a school's supplementary reading program.

⁵John Goldwater, Americana in Four Colors (New York: Comics Magazine Association, 1974, p. 7.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This author found numerous studies concerning reading interests of students, comic books or general reading interests. The studies reviewed in this section were limited to those about comics. A few reports have referred to the age, grade level and academic achievement of the comic book readers. The special use that many have made of comic books for a teaching technique in the classroom has also been included in this study. Although, as previously mentioned, most of the research was written over twenty-five years ago, it has been assumed valid until more research has been completed on the subject.

An article by Alongi (1974)⁶ stated that although the stories in comic books appeared to be trite and predictable to adult readers, ~~however~~ to most youngsters they are sophisticated and topical, e.g., women's lib has been utilized many times in Archie stories. According to Daniel (1971) comics served as a revealing reflector of popular attitudes, tastes, morals, and spoke directly to human desires, needs and emotions.⁷

Witty (1949)⁸ found that the large amounts of time children devoted to the radio, comic books, motion

⁶Constance Alongi, "Response to Kay Haugaard: Comic Books Revisited," Reading Teacher, 37: 801-803, May 1974.

⁷Les Daniel, The Comix: A History of Comic Books in America, (New York: Dienstfrey, 1951), p. 8.

⁸Paul Witty, "Children's Interest in Comics, Radio, Motion Pictures and TV," Educational Administration and Supervision, 38: 138, March 1952.

pictures and TV has become a concern. . . , however, teachers recognized the possibilities of utilizing children's strong interests to motivate reading and to foster learning. Studies confirmed the students' interest in comic books; however, many times students have not admitted this in school because many felt that most adults disapproved of these books as not 'good reading materials'.

The Orlando Public Library, Orlando, Florida, discovered a high interest in comic books and has subsequently acquired a worthwhile collection. This Florida library reported a large circulation for the comics.⁹

Another study to determine the extent to which comics were being read was conducted by W. W. Blakely (1956),¹⁰ who reported that junior high school males read an average of five comic books per week while females read only three and one-third titles per week. An investigation by Witty (1949)¹¹ found little change in comic book reading from fourth grade through sixth grade. Girls of all three grades read 'on the average' slightly over eleven magazines, and boys read slightly over fourteen. Butterworth and Thompson noted that the quantity of reading

⁹Will Eisner, "Comic Books in the Library," Library Journal 99: p. 2706, October 15, 1974.

¹⁰Paul Blakely, "They Still Read Comic Books," Elementary English, April 1958, p. 250.

¹¹Paul Witty and Robert Sizemore, "Reading the Comics: A Summary of Studies and An Evaluation I," Elementary English, December 1954, p. 502.

and the type of comics were greatly affected by the sex differences at all grade levels.¹²

Accepting that the reading of comic materials was entrenched in the American way of life, Nila Banton Smith suggested that comics be used to build interest in reading desirable stories and books.

What might one expect if comics met the exacting standards of accuracy and literary style associated with the classroom textbook? Would they then be useful for classroom instruction? To answer these questions, a study was undertaken at Florida State University.¹³ The researchers questioned third grade students as to the format preference for learning 'how fish swim.' After being personally interviewed, the sixty-three students were given the choice of a comic book presentation, a science reader, or a typewritten paper. The investigators indicated that over 64% of the students selected the science reader. Reasons given by the children for their choice indicated that while they liked comics for entertainment they associated the comics with fantasy and distortions of reality.

The age of the reader influenced the type of comics students read as well as reasons for reading them. Norvell (1952) found that the number of comic book readers

¹²Ibid., p. 506.

¹³R. C. Wilson and E. I. Schaffer, "Reading Comics to Learn," Elementary School Journal, November 1965, pp. 81-83.

decreased as students entered the adolescent stage of growth. In a survey of newspaper comic strip readers made by Norvell, 79% read a popular comic in 4-6. When high school students were compared to the elementary grade level students it was found that only 29.1% of this level read the same comic.¹⁴ Witty (1941)¹⁵ and Exton (1948)¹⁶ reached similar conclusions with their research.

In any discussion of reading interests of students, variation occurs according to the grade level, reading ability and the sex of the student. The type of comics and the population of readers usually had wider range of differences in the adolescent stage. Blakely (1956)¹⁷ and Witty (1948)¹⁸ found that male and female readers in the lower and upper elementary grades like funny or humorous comics as their favorite type of comic. The male student continued to enjoy this comic type into the teenage years. Females gave these comics a much lower rating in popularity, Sterner (1947)¹⁹.

Katherine Wolfe and Margaret Fiske in a 1949 study found a progression of types of comic magazines children

¹⁴George Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read, Chicago: Silver Burdett, 1958, p. 162.

¹⁵Witty, op. cit., p. 503.

¹⁶Witty, op. cit., p. 502.

¹⁷Blakely, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁸Paul Witty, "Reading the Comics: A Summary of Studies - An Evaluation II," Elementary English, January 1955, p. 45.

¹⁹Witty, Reading. . . I, op. cit., p. 502.

enjoyed. When young the appeal was in the funny animal comics; when 10-12 years the enjoyment was found in the adventure, crime and mystery comics; ~~and~~ during the junior high the appeal was toward reading the true and classic comics.²⁰

In many of the studies, the definite attitudes and preferences of the children toward the reading of comics differed from those of adults. Langer²¹ in a 1970 study questioned whether what the students liked to read differed from what their teachers allowed in the classroom. This study revealed a pattern of reading preference of high and low achievers. Of the high achievers, approximately 56% requested library books and wanted these in the classrooms. The low achievers chose comic book formats and also wanted these for school use. Both groups indicated that most teachers would not approve of the comics for class time.

Despite the concern of some adults that comics are not quality material for the classroom, there are many in the educational field who have successfully used the magazines. Prentice (1968),²² Cohan (1965),²³ and

²⁰Witty. . . I, p. 506.

²¹Robert Langer, "Reading Interests and School Achievement," Reading Improvement, Spring 1970, pp. 18-19.

²²Ann Prentice, "Comics Scene," Library Journal 93: January 1, 1968, p. 59.

²³M. Cohan, "Comic Books in the Classroom," Sociology of Education, 39: 324-325, May 1965.

Hallenbeck (1974,²⁴ in their remediation programs integrated comic books into the curriculum. Other teachers such as C. E. Carraher (1975)²⁵ used comics for students in science class, while literature enrichment was the approach of both Leonard (1975)²⁶ and Miner (1958).²⁷ The Federal Government found that during World War II and the Korean War comic book illustrations for their training manuals helped ease the frustrations of the poor readers.²⁸

Leading educators have recognized that there may be a value in the comics. Dr. Robert Thorndike in a study of the vocabulary and reading difficulty of four magazines, Superman, Batman, Action Comics, and Detective Comics, found that each magazine contained about 10,000 different words.²⁹

Another educator, Dr. Irving D. Lorge, who headed a team of researchers analyzing the comics medium, stated:

²⁴P. N. Hallenbeck, "Remediation with Comic Strips," Journal Learning Disabilities, 9: 11-15, January 1976.

²⁵C. E. Carraher, "Comics: No-Nonsense Classroom Aids," Science Teacher, 43: 30, November 1975.

²⁶Harris Leonard, "Classics: Alive and Well With Superman," College English, 37: 405-7, December 1975.

²⁷Marilyn Miner, "Charlie Brown Goes to School," English Journal, 58: 1183-5, November 1969.

²⁸Eisner, op. cit., pp. 2703-7.

²⁹Witty, Reading. . . I, op. cit., p. 46.

In terms of our researches, comics can make a fruitful appeal to the interest of children. Comics can give children a very sound and thorough orientation into the facts of biography, the appreciation of the outdoors, understanding of science, enjoyment of a plot, or the appreciation of humor. The amount of incidental information youngsters are likely to pick up is considerable.³⁰

³⁰Goldwater, op. cit., p. 27.

SUMMARY

Many of the studies of comic book readers were researched over twenty-five years ago. However, some reports referred to the age, grade level and academic achievement of the readers of comics. The more recent material of the last ten years mentioned in the previous section were the various uses some teachers have made of the interest in comic books for a teaching technique.

W. W. Blakely's study showed that male junior high students read more comics than females did. Butterworth and Thompson's research also noted that the quantity of reading was affected by sex differences.

The grade level and age of the comic book readers was also found to be significant. Norvell (1952), Witty (1941), and Exton (1948) determined that younger elementary students read more comics than students twelve years and older. Other studies have shown that the types of comics are influenced by age factors. The lower and upper elementary grade students liked humorous comics. Butterworth and Thompson, also Blakely (1956), Witty (1948), and Margaret Fiske and Katherine Wolfe (1949) all indicated funny or humorous comics were the most popular.

Academic achievement was another consideration showed in a study by Langer (1970). Lower achievers in school preferred comic books for supplementary reading. However, a research project by Florida State University

questioned students as to their choice of 'how to learn how fish swim' and they selected the science reader.

Witty (1948) and Nila Banton Smith (1965) suggested that high interest in comics be used to motivate reading and foster learning. Finally, Daniel (1971) mentioned that comics served as a revealing reflector of popular attitudes, tastes and mores.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this paper was conducted in the Ames, Iowa elementary schools during the 1976-1977 school year. Third grade students or Primary IV (term used in the Ames, Iowa schools) and sixth graders or Intermediate III students (term used in the Ames, Iowa schools) were studied ~~for~~ the amount of reading interests in comic books in terms of the students' grade placement level, sex, and reading level.

Six of the nine elementary schools in the system were chosen for this study. The schools selected were Edwards, Fellows, Meeker, Mitchell, Northwood, and Sawyer. The selection of these attendance centers was done by dividing the areas of Ames into three main geographical locations. From each of the sections, the researcher made sure to include one school with enrollment over 300 and one with less than 300 students.

For the purpose of removal of ambiguous term(s) or unclear question(s), it was necessary to pre-test the questionnaire. One Primary IV and one Intermediate III were chosen for the pre-test and are not included in the final sampling.

The "Comic Book Reading Interests" questionnaire was approved by the Ad Hoc Committee for Research headed by Dr. Luther Kiser, Director of Curriculum, Ames, Iowa. Another member of the committee, Mr. James Seim, Elementary Director also granted the request for the researcher to

consult student record files concerning their reading scores of the Stanford Achievement Test. Following the approval of the committee, the administrator of each elementary school in the study received a copy of *the* questionnaire and an explanation of the research procedure, the time element for the survey and request for their teachers' cooperation. This procedure of checking with the Committee for Research, Directors of Curriculum and Elementary Schools, and the administrators was required for the researcher to be given permission to do the study in the Ames Community Schools.

All the teachers of Primary IV and Intermediate III classes involved in the study were requested by letter to administer the survey during the class day. The deadline date was set for May 27, 1977. The cover letter and questionnaire gave specific directions for administering the questionnaire to readers and non-readers of comic books. When the teachers received their packet of questionnaires, the researcher asked for cooperation in the research. The Ad Hoc Committee's permission for research did not include a guarantee that each teacher *should* participate in the study.

The total population within the six chosen schools *and* were 296 Primary IV and 315 Intermediate III students. The researcher received 199 Primary IV and 208 Intermediate III responses.

After all the questionnaires were completed by the students, the researcher consulted the files and recorded

each student's stanine score in the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test. The explanation on the test for interpretation of the scores indicated that a stanine score of 5 or below the student would be considered "average" or "below average" for their grade level; stanine score of 6 or above represented "above average" for that grade level.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the previous section, the sampling characteristics, the method of data collection was discussed. This section is devoted to analysis of the data.

The amount of reading interest in comic books of the students of a lower elementary class, namely Primary IV, and an upper elementary class, namely Intermediate III, was compared. The variables under consideration for the study were the students' sex^l (male or female), reading level, and their grade placement level. The types of comics read by the two grade levels, although no hypotheses were formed concerning the topic, ~~are~~^{were} included. On the questionnaire the students listed their favorite titles and the researcher then categorized these by types through two sources: 1) Katz's Magazines for Libraries and 2) students' copies of the comics.

Before considering the students' reading interests by grade level, sex and reading level, there was a need to describe the readers and non-readers of comic books. From 199 Primary IV, 52 girls and 60 boys indicated they were readers of comics. Non-readers for this grade level were 51 girls and 36 boys.

Intermediate III students indicated that 44 girls and 68 boys were readers of comics, while 52 girls and 44 boys were non-readers of the books.

The 208 Intermediate III responses indicated that 112 (53.8%) male and female students considered themselves

53.8%

readers of comic books, while 96 (46.16%) answered that they were non-readers of comic books.

The Primary IV students had 112 (56.28%) as readers and 87 (43.72%) as non-readers of comic books.

With regard to the sex of the students, out of 199 females in Primary IV and Intermediate III levels, 96 (48.24%) categorized themselves as readers and 103 (51.76%) as non-readers. From 208 questionnaires of the male students it was found that 128 (61.53%) were readers and 80 (38.47%) were non-readers. In the total sampling of 407 students (male and female), 128 boys and 96 girls were readers of comics, while 80 boys and 103 girls were non-readers. This showed that 55.03% of the total were readers and 44.97% were non-readers of comics. The percentage of readers was only 10.06% more than that of the non-readers.

In this section the data related to the readers of comic books by their grade level, sex, and reading level are discussed.

Hypothesis 1:

During a one week period, male students in the Primary and Intermediate grades will read 25% more comic books than female students.

Table 1 shows that in Primary IV grade both sexes read an equal number of comics with a total of 186 being read by each group. However, among the Intermediate III students, 90 comics were read by girls and 175 by the boys. The Primary IV grade males had read an equal amount of comics as the females, while the upper grade boys indicated

66.04% of the total amount of comics and 33.96% for the girls. Primary IV males were not reading 25% more comic books than female students. Only the Intermediate III males read 25% more comic books than female students.

Table 1. Quantity of Comic Books Read by Males and Females in Primary IV and Intermediate III Grades

Sex	Comics Read			
	Primary IV		Intermediate III	
	No.	%	No.	%
Girls	186	50	90	33.96
Boys	186	50	175	66.04
Total	372	100	265	100.00

On the questionnaire when all boys and girls were asked the amount of comic book reading they did during one week, Table 2 indicated their total response of the quantity of books. The girls read a total of 276 comics while the boys indicated 361 comics. The total of comics being read by both sexes in one week were 637 comics. The girls read 43.53% of the total, while the boys showed 56.47% of the total. Although no evidence was presented in this study that male students in Primary IV and Intermediate III read 25% more comics than the girls, the male students had read 12.94% more than the girls. W. W. Blakely in his research only indicated that males read more comics than female students.

Table 2. Number of Comic Books Read by All Girls and Boys in Primary IV and Intermediate III Grades

	Comics Read	
	No.	%
All Girls	276	43.53
All Boys	361	56.47
Total	637	100.00

Hypothesis 2:

Students with a stanine score of 5 or below in the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test will read twice as many comics as those with a higher stanine score of 6 or above on the same test.

Before the analysis of the data for hypothesis 2, it must be indicated that no information was obtainable for 17 Primary IV and 31 Intermediate III students' stanine score from the Stanford Achievement Test - reading section. The test was administered during the latter part of September, 1976 and there were 48 students not present during the testing period. Ames, Iowa has a somewhat transient population because of Iowa State University. As a result of this circumstance, this reduced the sample size of the Intermediate students from 112 to 81 and the Primary IV from 112 to 95 for this aspect of the study.

In Table 3 it was shown that for Primary IV students with a stanine score of 6 or above this group read

almost twice as many comics as those with 5 or below score. The prediction that the 'average' or 'below average' readers would be the readers of comics was not supported by this study.

Table 3. Stanine Scores from Reading Section of the Stanford Achievement Test for the Readers of Comics in Primary IV

Primary IV	Comics Read	
	No.	%
Stanine 5 or below	82	30.03
Stanine 6 or above	191	69.97
Total	273	100.00

The Intermediate III students with stanine score of 6 or above for the reading section of Stanford Achievement Test read almost 3.42 times as many comics as students with the score of 5 or below. Table 4 indicated that students with average or below average reading ability read 45 comics and the above average readers read 154 books. The average and below average students were reading 22.61% of the total, but the above average read 77.39% comics.

Table 4. Stanine Scores from Reading Section of the Stanford Achievement Test for the Readers of Comics in Intermediate III

Intermediate III	Comics Read	
	No.	%
Stanine 5 or below	45	22.61
Stanine 6 or above	154	77.39
Total	199	100.00

According to Table 5 the combined group of students in Primary IV and Intermediate III with stanine score of 6 or above read 2.72 times as many comics as those with 5 or below reading score. The below average reader had 127 comics or 26.91% of total and the above average reader read 345 or 73.09% of the total read by both grade levels. The prediction that it would be the below average students who would read more comic books than the above average was not proven. Robert Langer in his research indicated that the lower achievers preferred the comic books for their reading more than the higher achievers did. However, in the study of Mr. Langer's, it was not mentioned how he determined the 'lower achiever' and the 'higher achiever'.

Dr. Robert Thorndike indicated in his research that four magazines he studied contained over 10,000 different words. There might be some possibility that some comics

are too difficult for the 'average' or 'below average' student.

Table 5. Stanine Scores for All Primary IV and Intermediate III Students

Primary IV and Intermediate III	Comics Read	
	No.	%
Stanine 5 or below	127	26.91
Stanine 6 or above	345	73.09
Total	472	100.00

Hypothesis 3:

Students in Primary IV will read 25% more comic books than students in the Intermediate III grade.

Table 6 illustrated that Primary IV read 372 comics (58.39%) and Intermediate III students read 265 (41.60% of the total/the total number of comics read was 637). So an increase of 25% more comics were read by Primary IV than

Intermediate III could not be concluded. The Primary grade read 16.78% more than the Intermediate grade.

Table 6. Comparison of Quantity of Comics Read by Primary IV and Intermediate III

	Comics Read	
	No.	%
Primary IV	372	58.39
Intermediate III	265	41.61
Total	637	100.00

Types of Comic Books

The students were asked on the questionnaire to name their favorite titles. Most of the students included from two to five titles of their choice.

The researcher from the listing in Katz's Magazines for Libraries plus a check of comics brought to school by students grouped the comics by categories. For Primary IV and Intermediate III there were nine types of comics mentioned by the students, ^{plus one} all listed in Table 7. Primary IV differed in only one category "Animals/Nature" as one choice not mentioned by the Intermediate students. The older boys and girls read "Science Fiction" comics and none were listed by the Primary children.

Table 7. Types of Comic Books Read by Primary IV and Intermediate III Students

Type of Comic	Primary IV		Intermediate III	
	Mentioned by Students the No. of Times	% Indicating Comic Type	Mentioned by Students the No. of Times	% Indicating Comic Type
Humorous	109	57.37	150	52.63
Superheroes	45	23.68	112	39.30
Supernatural	16	8.42	4	1.40
TV/Motion Pictures	6	3.16	8	2.81
Mystery and Detective	4	2.11	2	.70
Adventure	3	1.58	2	.70
Animals/Nature	3	1.58	-	-
War	2	1.05	3	1.05
Classics	2	1.05	3	1.05
Science Fiction	-	-	1	.35

Both the Primary and Intermediate grades had chosen humorous and superheroes comics for their top two choices of kinds of comics they preferred. The researcher found it of interest that the category of supernatural comics were in third place with 16 votes from Primary IV students and this then dropped to fourth place for the Intermediate III students' interests. The TV/Motion Picture comics had a higher rating with the Intermediate students than with the Primary IV group.

The results of the categorization of the comics selected by the Ames, Iowa students supported the research by W. W. Blakely (1956) and Witty (1958) that students in the lower and upper elementary grades liked funny comics. However, there would need to be a future survey of high school students whether this type continued to be of interest as a student gets older.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was: to investigate the reading of comics by students of a lower elementary class and an upper elementary class. The study considered whether the grade level, as well as reading level, and sex of student influenced the quantity of comics being read.

For the purpose of this study, 611 questionnaires were sent to teachers of Primary IV and Intermediate III classes in 6 elementary attendance centers in Ames, Iowa. Of this total, 208 Intermediate III and 199 Primary IV questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

The finding^{ings} of this study ~~was~~ as follows:

1) The students in Intermediate III and Primary IV reported the same number of readers of comic books.

2) In regard to the sex of the student, boys read slightly more than girls in both levels combined.

3) No differences were found for the number of comic books read by boys and girls in Primary IV.

4) In the Intermediate III grade level, the boys read almost twice as many comics as the girls.

5) ^{Just} Intermediate III and Primary IV combined, the boys read slightly more than the girls from both levels.

6) The students in Primary IV with stanine score of 6 or above read twice as many comics as students with 5 or below stanine score.

7) The Intermediate III students with 6 or above stanine score read ^{twice as many} twice as many comics as students with 5 or below scores.

8) The combined sample of students in Primary IV and Intermediate III showed that students with 6 or above stanine score read ^{read 5 times} almost twice as many comics as those with 5 or below stanine score.

9) Humorous comics and Superhero comics were the first and second place choices of both Primary IV and Intermediate III students.

In general, it might be concluded that based on the data obtained in this study that grade placement level, and sex are not important indicators of difference in readers of comic books. However, the stanine score of the reading section of the Stanford Achievement Test appears to be a stronger indicator ^{when compared with the sex and grade placement level of the students.} ~~and~~

Limitations of this Study

Some limitations become apparent in this study. First, in this study the sample size was reduced by not being able to obtain stanine scores for all participants. Perhaps another evaluation of their reading could have been found. Second, the questionnaire was mailed to teachers and questions could not be asked of the student for ^{researcher's?} clarification. Third, the survey was administered by the teacher in the classroom and perhaps the teacher's attitude towards comic book reading might have been influential upon students' responses. There were several times the researcher noted that students appeared to have almost an identical answer.

Suggestions for Future Study

The grade placement level, sex, and stanine reading score were considered for this study. However, other variables might be chosen for a future study such as the parents' socio-economic status, also the race and the age of the readers of comic books.

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APPENDIXES

All students in Primary IV and Intermediate III are to fill out the questionnaire. Please have them include all information at the top, name, etc.

Readers of comic books will answer all questions. Non-readers of comic books will answer only question #1.

COMIC BOOKS

STUDENT'S NAME FIRST LAST SCHOOL

Please Check One Grade Level: Please Check One

() Boy
() Girl

() Primary IV
() Intermediate III

1. Do you read comic books? Check One Answer

() Yes
() No

If you answered 'no' to question 1 then do not answer the other questions, hand your paper into your teacher.

2. If you answered 'yes' to question 1; how many comic books do you read in one week?

3. Name your five favorite comic book titles.

If you do not have five favorite comics just write down the titles you do like to read.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Edwards School
Ames, Iowa
May 2, 1977

Dear

This past year I have been completing my master's degree at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa. The purpose of my final paper is to study whether students are still reading comic books, to the extent that they have done in the past. The enclosed packet of questionnaires is for distribution within your school to the teachers of Primary IV and Intermediate III grades.

The questionnaire was submitted for approval to Dr. Luther Kiser and his Ad Hoc Committee. The form, as revised, has been approved for selected schools.

Would you please assist me by distributing the questionnaires among your teachers? The students should be able to complete the forms in less than fifteen minutes. The survey, although very brief, does seek to answer several questions: 1) Are children reading comics? 2) What types of comics are they reading? 3) Do the readers of comics vary greatly according to their sex, grade and reading level?

Although some of your classes may have multi-age levels within the units, only the Primary IV and Intermediate III students are included in the study. The forms are to be completed and mailed back to me through the school mail by May 27, 1977. If the teachers do have any questions regarding the study, I will answer them after school hours at 292-1033 or at home at 292-6853.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Beverly Baum

LETTER TO THE TEACHER

Edwards School
Ames, Iowa 50010
May 2, 1977

Dear

This survey is being conducted to determine your students' interest in reading comic books. The questionnaire was submitted for approval to Dr. Luther Kiser and his committee and the approval was granted last week.

The questionnaire is to be filled out by Primary IV or Intermediate III students in your class. The task should take less than fifteen minutes of class time. After the students in the grades indicated have filled out the form, please return all material to the researcher, Beverly Baum at Edwards School. Any questions regarding the form should be directed to the researcher after school hours. (Office: 292-1033; Home: 292-6853)

The deadline date is May 27, 1977 for the questionnaires.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Beverly Baum